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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that excellence in American education requires increased superintendent effectiveness and productivity. It provides examples of inadequate educational outcomes and lists recommendations for improvement. These recommendations include more effective superintendent selection procedures, better superintendent working conditions, greater superintendent job satisfaction, and national certification. (JAM)

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Effectiveness, Productivity, and Excellence in American Schools

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Here are some of the unsolicited comments on Dr. Chand's paper on:

Effectiveness, Productivity, and Excellence in American Schools

Many thanks for your letter expressing concern for the quality of education in America today, ... I am grateful that you have written me on this issue. ... It is one of the most important agenda items before our nation for the coming months and years.

George Bush
The Vice President
Washington, D.C., 2/25/1988

The Secretary is keenly interested in improving the productivity of American Schools, and so your work is quite timely. You make a number of very useful points, and I appreciate your taking the time to share your views.

Nelson Smith, Director
Research Applications Division
U.S. Department of Education
Washington, D.C., 3/1/1988

Thank you very much for having taken the time to write and to send the interesting article regarding the quality of education in America. I am glad to have it, and I anticipate that it will prove to be of use.

Daniel Patrick Moynihan
U.S. Senator
Washington, D.C. 3/22/1988

Thank you for contacting me to expresss your concern over public education, ... This is a matter of great concern to me. ... I will continue to evaluate our nation's education system to ensure continued improvement in the quality of education.

Bill Bradley
U.S. Senator
Washington, D.C., 3/7/1988

I will keep your views in mind when we are considering education legislation.

Edward M. Kennedy
U.S. Senator
Washington, D.C., 4/18/1988

I have shared your correspondence with Dr. Joel Blook, who heads the Division of General Academic Education, where issues such as those you have referred to are addressed. Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts with us.

Cummings A. Piatt
Acting Commissioner of Education
State of New Jersey, 3/7/1988

I look forward to reading it. I am also taking the liberty of sharing it with my Commissioner of Education.

Steve Cowper
Governor, State of Alaska
Juneau, Alaska 3/30/1988

I found your ideas to be interesting and thought provoking. We in Alaska share your belief in the importance of providing the best possible education for our youth.

William G. Demmert
Commissioner of Education
State of Alaska, 4/29/1988

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EFFECTIVENESS, PRODUCTIVITY, AND EXCELLENCE IN AMERICAN SCHOOLS

Starting with "A Nation at Risk", the 1983 report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education,[1] study after study has placed the American schools in the national limelight. Education has become a political, social, and educational issue and will remain so in the years to come.

In recent years, virtually every state legislature or board of education has made changes in the name of reform. Forty-one states, for example, have increased the number of core academic requirements for a high school diploma, while 24 have increased teacher salaries and 30 have imposed competency tests for new or current teachers.[2] The effect of these changes has not yet been studied but more and more studies have found a lot wrong with American public high schools.[3]

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[1]The National Commission on Excellence in Education, A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform (Washington, D.C.: The National Commission on Excellence in Education, U.S. Department of Education, 1983).

[2]Edward B. Fiske, New York Times, April 27, 1986, p. 32.

[3]Jonathan Friendly, New York Times, September 15, 1985, p. E6.

Current Status of Education

Here are some of the facts, problems, issues, and challenges about the education:

1. In a recent written test the author asked hundreds of high school students, how many cents are there in 2½ dollars? Majority of students failed to answer it correctly.

2. In a study of 5,000 high school seniors, 25 percent of the students in Dallas could not identify Mexico; almost one-half of the students in Hartford could not name three countries in Africa; and 40 percent of the students in Kansas city could not name three countries in South America.[4] The same study found that 95 percent of the students could not locate Vietnam on a map.[5]

3. Of 15,000 tested, 20% could not write a check without an error so serious that a bank could not cash it; 22% were unable to address an envelope well enough to ensure postal delivery; 40% could not figure correct change from a store purchase.[6]

4. One of eight Americans cannot read.[7]

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[4]Effie Jones quoting Senator William Bradley of New Jersey The School Administrator (January 1988): 32.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Ezra Bown "Loosing the War of Letters" Time (May 5, 1986): 68.

[7]Ibid.

5. Twenty-six percent of our students do not finish high school; in some inner cities, the drop out rate is estimated to exceed 70 percent among certain populations.[8] Eighty percent of the nation's prisoners are high school dropouts.[9]

6. In 1980, the United States provided 5.9 percent of its gross national product in public expenditures for education. Canada provided 7.7 percent, Norway 8.8 percent, Sweden 9.1 percent, the U.S.S.R. 7.2 percent and the United Kingdom 4.7 percent (UNESCO, Paris). Our challenge is to increase that percent to ensure needed financial support for excellence.[10]

7. Twenty seven percent of teachers expect to leave teaching in the next five years.[11]

8. Average Mathematics score for students in eighth grade in the U.S. (1981-82) are lower (48%) than those of the students in Finland, England and Wales, Scotland, Ontario, 14 country/province average (52%), Belgium (French), British Columbia, Hungary, Belgium

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[8]Jones

[9]American Association of School Administrators Leadership News (Arlington, VA), September 30, 1987, p. 1.

[10]William B. Royster, President, American Association of School Administrators, School Administrator January 1985, p. 4.

[11]Albert Shanker, President, American Federation of Teachers, quoting Metropolitan Life Poll of the American Teacher, New York Times, September 15, 1985, p. E 7.

(Flemish), France, Netherlands, and Japan (64%).[12]

9. Score in Algebra and Calculus for top 5 percent of 12th graders (1981-82) in the U.S. are lower (52%) than those of the students in Scotland, Belgium (Franch), British Columbia, England and Wales, Belgium (Flemish), New Zealand, Hungary, Sweden, Ontario, Finland, and Japan (66%).[13]

10. Of the 1.1 million teenage mothers nationwide, 670,000 have not finished high school. The teen pregnancy rate in the U.S. is twice that of France, England and Canada; three times that of Sweden, and seven times that of the Netherlands. Seventy-five percent of all single mothers under 25 live in peverty.[14]

11. The United States has the highest rate of teen drug use of any industrialized nation.[15] In the 1986 Gallup Poll on education, drug abuse was for the first time seen as the number one problem facing the nation's schools.[16]

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[12]William J. Bennett, Secretary, U.S. Department of Education What Works: Research About Teaching and Learning (U.S. Department of Education, Washington D.C., 1986), p. 28.

[13]Bennett, What Works: Research About Teaching and Learning, p. 30.

[14]UFT Bulletin/New York Teacher June 8, 1987, p. 7.

[15]American Association of School Administrators, Leadership News (Arlington, VA), June 15, 1987, p. 1.

[16]William J. Bennett, Secretary, U.S. Department of Education What Works: Schools Without Drugs (U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C., 1987), p. V.

School Superintendents

Effectiveness and productivity of schools is multidimensional. — Most of the recommendations/activities of the reports, state regulations, and board of educations are important for improving the education in America and may help in the educational improvement.

Education is a responsibility of the individual state in the nation. Each state has formed various school districts in their respective states. All the 15,236 school districts in the nation are governed by their boards of education, who have employed the school superintendents for the management of the schools. The school superintendents are the chief school administrators and hence play a vital role in the education of the young people in the nation. They are responsible for the overall success of the educational programs under their supervision. One way to bring the educational improvement like other improvements is from the top administrators. Superintendents make a difference.[17] With supportive superintendents ... success follows.[18] No other effort in educational improvement appears to be more important than the role of the superintendents. Yet, most of the studies or other reports on educational reforms do not

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[17]Laurence Iannccone "Superintendent Make A Difference" The School Administrator (September 1981): 16.

[18]Shirley Thornton, High School Principal, San Francisco on "ABC News Nightline", September 4, 1984.

reflect the effects of selection, qualifications, and working conditions of the school superintendents on the educational improvement.[19]

Recommendations

1. An effective procedure to select competent chief school administrators should be used.[20]

2. Only those with superior professional background should be selected as superintendents.[21]

3. Efforts should be made to increase the superintendents' level of job satisfaction.[22]

4. Superintendents should be provided with the best possible working conditions.[23]

5. A national certification instead of the current state by state certification should be considered.[24,25]

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[19]Krishan Chand Educational Improvement in the United States ERIC Document Reproduction Service, U.S. Department of Education, ED 268 629, 1984.

[20]Krishan Chand A Handbook for the School Boards in America for the Selection of the Superintendent of Schools ERIC Document Reproduction Service, U.S. Department of Education, ED 277 120, 1987.

[21]Chand, Educational Improvement in the U.S.

[22]Krishan Chand "Job Satisfaction of Superintendents in the U.S." (Ed.D. Dissertation, New York University, 1982).

[23]Ibid.

[24]Edward B. Fiske "Redesigning the American Teacher" New York Times, Sec. 12, April 12, 1987, p. 19.

[25]Carolyn Trice and Marcella Dianda, "Teachers Recommend National Certification" Leadership News, American Association of School Administrators, February 28, 1987, p.5.

6. The following facts suggests that a thorough indepth and nationwide study should be conducted on the effects of schooling if it is "optional" compared to the present system where schooling is "compulsory" for all the children in the nation. The findings of such a study should be used in educational planning.

(i) Newman says "I recently attended a meeting of British and American educators where discussion centered around a number of differences between the British and American systems of education. At one point, a British educator told the Americans we would have to make a choice.

Either you have a very selective education system which sorts people out and yields high quality, he asserted, or you have an unselective system and you learn to live with low quality or mediocrity. "Choose," he said. You can't have both."[26]

(ii) In Japan, high school is not compulsory, yet 95 percent of all Japanese students enter high school. Ninety-two percent of them graduate at 17-18 years of age. In the U.S., high school is compulsory but less than 75 percent graduate. Japanese students also graduate at more advanced levels of achievement in all subject areas than our students.[27]

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[26]Frank Newman, President, Education Commission of the States, "Assessment for the 21st Century" The School Administrator (American Association of School Administrators, VA), December 1987, p. 46.

[27]James E. Malvin "What American Educators Can Learn from Japanese" The School Administrator (American Association of School Administrators, VA), April 1987, p. 26.

(iii) ... those are in school, making life hell for every one else.[28]

(iv) The pollsters asked the teachers what steps they thought might be taken to retain good people in teaching ... 85% responded, "having students who are more strongly motivated to learn.[29]

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[28]Albert Shanker New York Times January 17, 1988, p. 7.

[29]Albert Shanker quoting Metroppolitan Life Poll of the American Teacher, New York Times, p. E.7.

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